

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Re: DSS Budget
March 4, 2011**

Robert Howard, Branford, CT

Good evening chairs and members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Robert Howard and I'm a member of Options, a program of Harbor Health Services in Branford. I am a member of Keep the Promise Coalition and a registered voter living in Branford, CT.

I want to thank the Governor for presenting an overall balanced budget that invests in community mental health care instead of costly, emergency care. Specifically, I support the investment in Supportive Housing. I feel it is cost-effective compared to the hospital or other more restrictive settings. I have a friend who lived in a group home. They now live in an apartment in the community. There is a lot more freedom living in the community. Everyone deserves the chance to live in a less structured setting.

Living in the community has been extremely positive for my friend. However, one thing they struggle with is affording prescription co-pays. They often have to go for weeks without medication they need. This affected my friend because they started over-spending which made things even worse. The proposal in the DSS budget to increase co-pays up to \$25 per month would make it harder for my friend to afford their prescriptions.

Please support most of the Governor's proposed budget options in regards to DMHAS and mental health care. Please reject the proposal to increase prescription co-pays in the DSS budget which affects many people served by DMHAS. Thank you.